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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 005511

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: "FRIENDS OF AMERICA" DECRY LACK OF PUBLIC U.S.  
CONDEMNATION OF MUQATAA SIEGE, U.S. FOCUS ON IRAQ TO THE  
EXCLUSION OF ISRAEL

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

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WHY NO U.S. CONDEMNATION OF MUQATAA DESTRUCTION?  
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11. (C) A group of self-described "Friends of America" representing the Amman World Affairs Council called on the Ambassador and PolCouns September 22 to deliver a letter from the WAC to President Bush (excerpts in para 7 below). The group members said that they had all lived and studied in the U.S. and admired the "honesty, sincerity, and hopefulness" of average Americans, as well as the open democratic U.S. system of governance. However, U.S. policy in the region in recent months had caused them to "lose confidence in the principles of U.S. life and government." According to one group member, "it is a difficult time for people who support the U.S."

12. (C) The group expressed dismay that, unlike most of the rest of the world, there had been no strong public U.S. criticism of the Israeli destruction of much of PA Chairman Yassir Arafat's Muqataa compound in Ramallah, and only limited U.S. pressure on Israel to stop its actions. One group member said "the U.S. can stop Israel when it wants to -- Eisenhower did it" (during the Suez Crisis of 1956). What is frustrating for Jordanians regarding this situation is, they argued, that "the U.S. can do something to restrain Israel but chooses not to."

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NOT ONLY WEAPONS CAUSE MASS DESTRUCTION  
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13. (C) The group expressed a lack of understanding of the U.S. preoccupation with the urgency of the threat from Iraqi WMD. They noted a "contrast between U.S. policy on Iraq and on Israel" regarding both WMD and enforcement of UNSCRs. They argued that Israeli actions against Palestinians -- "especially the Israeli curfew and blockade" -- are a more imminent cause of mass destruction, and the threat is current and on-going. For example, the city of Nablus, they argued, has been under nearly continuous curfew for more than 80 days. People cannot go out to shop for food or other basic necessities. The sick cannot see doctors or go to hospitals. Most people cannot go to work, or children to school. Israeli incursions into Nablus have caused not only the destruction of police and security infrastructure, but also the British era government center and health, education, and land offices, where irreplaceable records were destroyed. "Israel is trying to dismantle the infrastructure of daily life in Palestine, as well as Palestine's history and its future."

14. (C) Given the "existential" nature of the targets that Israeli forces have been destroying in the West Bank, the group continued, more and more Jordanians were beginning to believe that Ariel Sharon might even attempt to force the transfer of Israeli Arabs into the West Bank, or even the transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank into Jordan. "Last year," one visitor commented, "I would have considered myself paranoid for thinking this way. Now I do not."

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"WE ASK FOR JUSTICE, NOT THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL"  
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15. (C) World Affairs Council Executive Director and group organizer, Fakhri Abu Shakra, concluded by saying that Israeli actions are hurting the "70 percent" of Palestinians who are peace-loving. The actions of the Israeli government and Palestinian terrorists, he argued, reinforce each other and will prevent a solution -- unless the U.S. steps in. He asked that the U.S. put greater pressure on Israel to improve the conditions for average Palestinians, and to reduce actions that provoke a violent Palestinian response. In the end, Jordanians are asking "for justice, not the destruction of Israel." He cited the Arab League initiative and Quartet roadmap as concrete ideas the U.S. must work with.

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COMMENT  
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16. (C) This conversation was unexceptional, but drew together the most commonly heard threads of Jordanian public and elite opinion on the MEPP. Despite loud public criticism of U.S. policy, this conversation, like most with educated Jordanians, concluded with a plea for continued (and even increased) U.S. involvement in the MEPP.

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EXCERPTS OF WAC LETTER TO PRESIDENT BUSH  
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17. (U) The group had earlier sent a two-page letter critical of U.S. policy in the region addressed to President Bush and dated September 10, 2002. Following are excerpts from that letter.

Mr. President,

We the undersigned represent a group of intellectuals, men and women, Muslim and Christian, from different walks of Jordanian society. We cherish the values of freedom, human rights, democracy, good governance, and political pluralism. We believe in the basic rights and freedoms of man, including his right to live free from oppression and persecution.

Few weeks ago (sic), you called upon all nations to stop terrorist killings.... However, when an Israeli F16 missile attack on Gaza killed fourteen innocent civilians, nine of them children, and wounded and maimed 180 other civilians in one night, you were far less engaged, simply describing as "heavy handed" the death and devastation caused by the Israeli use of American arms.

Sharon deliberately chose to launch that attack on the very day Palestinian leaders of various factions were about to sign a pledge to suspend violence, and Hamas leaders had spoken publicly about ending suicide bombings....

US policy has stripped Palestinian violence of its context, failing to appreciate that it is the response of a desperate and horribly oppressed people against the appalling weight of decades of military occupation.... Such unconditional support for Israeli actions is heading to become the source of major regional and global disorder.

Yet the Palestinians remain the natural allies to your yet to be realized vision, Mr. President, to move the region away from mutual assured destruction, toward just and lasting peace which future generations of Palestinians and Israelis can accept and protect. Such a vision will materialize into reality when the relevant U.N. and Security Council resolutions, combined with the Arab Summit Beirut initiative, are articulated within a short term time-table for Israeli withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied in 1967, the total dismantling of Israeli settlements in East (Arab) Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the establishment thereon of the sovereign State of Palestine.

Mr. President

You are a leader of a great and powerful country at decisive times....Responsible statesmanship requires listening to the proposed solutions of rational humanists rather than the loose cannons of the military industrial complex warned against by President Eisenhower.

The world does not have to be made up of enemies, Mr. President. You are in a position to make the difference.

(the letter was signed by 38 members of the World Affairs Council including several former Ministers, Members of Parliament, academics, and prominent businessmen)

end text of letter.

GNEHM